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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kimberly Clark, ARRA Coordinator
Office: 870.733.3513, Cell: 870.362.1188
Email: Kimberly.clark@arkansas.gov

The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Youth Employment Program, supported by the Arkansas Workforce Centers and Workforce Investment Board of Eastern Arkansas, will official kick off on Monday, June 15, 2009, putting over 200 youth, ages 16-21, to work throughout Crittenden, Cross, Lee, Phillips and St. Francis Counties using stimulus funding.

The Recovery Act, signed by President Obama on February 17, 2009, is intended to preserve and create jobs, promote the nation's economic recovery, and assist those most impacted by the recession. With the additional workforce funding provided in the Recovery Act, and the increased employment and training services such funding will support, the state's workforce system and will play a vital role in Arkansas' economic recovery by assisting workers who are facing unprecedented challenges to retool their skills and re-establish themselves in viable career paths.

"As the nation grinds through these challenging economic times, youth play a significant role in helping their families meet basic needs," said Senator Jack Crumbly. "The work they do will help them develop knowledge and confidence and we hope it will contribute to greater economic security for the families involved."

"The ARRA Summer Youth Program runs from June-September at which time the youth will be trained and placed in both public and private sector jobs, putting money in their pockets and needed money into the local economy," said Kimberly Clark, ARRA Coordinator. "This program provides important experiences for young people that can help them develop a career path by exposing them to a diverse array of jobs."

The majority of the youth will be working with city or county governments and in the public school systems. Youth will be working in various jobs that include clerical, data entry, summer school assistants, landscaping upkeep, and maintenance – among others. The program runs approximately six weeks for in school youth and 6-8 weeks for out of school youth.

During the summer program, work ethics will be stressed. "Youth will be taught positive work habits such as being on time, appropriate attire, following instructions, willingness to work with others, dependability, and working as a team -- to mention a few," said Clark. "This should enable the individual, hopefully, to incorporate these skills into their next job."

For in school youth, this is an opportunity to have a summer job while gaining work experience and work ethics with a plan to return to high school with motivation to graduate and develop a career.

Older youth, who are out of school, will be participating in the Governor's Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) initiative through the Arkansas Workforce Centers. The CRC is part of Governor Beebe's plan to demonstrate to business and industries that Arkansas has a skilled workforce that encourages new business and industry to the State. It is the intent of this summer program to assist the out of school youth in ultimately achieving either permanent employment or training that leads to full-time employment.

Older youth will also take part in the Arkansas Delta and Education Consortium (ADTEC) Day and be exposed to high-demand occupations, such as Advanced Manufacturing, Renewable Energy and Allied Health that are or will be offered at the community colleges in the Eastern Workforce Investment Area. Renewable Energy, a new degree, will be offered and will focus on the emerging Biofuel industry. In addition, a Military Career Expo event is planned to introduce and expose the youth to the Nations many available armed services.

"Being compensated monetarily, feeling a true sense of self worth, and learning the benefit of becoming a valued individual will instill genuine pride in a job well done --something our local youth need," Senator Crumbly added.